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ABSTRACT

Before teachers can decide how to teach writing to nonstandard dialect speakers, they should determine whether college students can in fact learn to command a second dialect (in this case, Standard English), as well as the most effective way to provide access to command of Standard English while educating the public about the values of nonstandard dialects. In judging whether students should be required to learn written Standard English, teachers might examine the implications of Standard English as "edited written English" and as "the white ruling class dialect," as well as the validity of claims about the need for Standard English in the world of employment. Although it is important for students to be able to read works of literature written in Standard English, the requirement that they themselves produce Standard English can easily threaten their sense of personhood. The key factor in adult learning of second dialects is motivation, which implies that students must decide for themselves whether the they want to learn Standard English. Students need to develop knowledge about the use of different dialects in different situations; therefore, teachers should teach all students about the systematic differences between standard and other dialects. Such teaching fosters respect for all dialects, as well as analytical intellectual growth. (GT)

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William H. Gilbert

"The Nonstandard Speaker and 'Standard' Writing"

Paper to be delivered on March 14, 1980, to the 1980 Convention of the Conference on College Composition and Communication

Let me put to ease, if not to sleep, the minds of those of you who are wondering what so pedagogical a title is doing on so political a program. If you believe that politics should be kept out of the classroom, your minds will be not eased but agitated when you hear me repeat the widely held belief that all teaching, especially all language teaching, is political.[1] The very choices of what to teach and how to evaluate learning are political decisions because they reflect the power of teachers over students. When this power imbalance mirrors the power imbalance in the society at large, as it does when middle-class teachers set tasks for and control the academic advancement of working-class students, the politics of education stand out starkly. Thus, pedagogues cannot escape politics. The danger in their attempt to escape is not that they might succeed--they can't--but that trying to wriggle out of politics will hide assumptions and processes that ought to be examined.

This is not a conviction that I have always held. When I proposed this topic last summer, I had in mind a discussion of teaching methods. My work with Jim Sledd, however, has shown me that other questions must be answered before the question of how to teach can be sensibly addressed. Those prior questions I have phrased to reflect my own situation in an open-admissions, inner-city college, where equal proportions of Blacks, Anglos, and Mexican-Americans are required to demonstrate proficiency in writing Standard English.

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This is the first prior question: Can college-age youths and older adults learn to command a second dialect, in this case Standard English? Though I will return to this question later, let me answer it briefly now in a conditional negative: second dialects are learned by adults only with enormous effort; and learning Standard English offers uncertain, probably incommensurate rewards. My "probably" suggests that we are not yet in a position to assess all the linguistic and social barriers in the way of productive command of a second dialect. In our uncertainty, the second prior question is like unto the first: Should adult students be required to command written Standard English? Or, since I am cynically assuming that the hunger for FTEs will not allow the requirement to lapse, what is the most effective way to provide access to command of Standard English and, at the same time, to educate the public about the values of other dialects that fall under the increasingly leakly umbrella term of nonstandard?

Even though I have assumed that the freshman composition will continue, with heavy emphasis on Standard English, I would like to characterize the arguments for and against the requirement by examining briefly a couple of rough synonyms for Standard English.

Calling Standard English edited written English for one of its more careful varieties emphasizes the continuity between today's composition student and her academic antecedents. The special formal register she is learning to produce is one developed and variously exploited by the great and not-so-great prose writers throughout the history of written English. Ability to imitate this register presumably will increase her ability to understand and appreciate what (if anything) she chooses to read that helped establish or extends that heritage. On the other hand, writing edited written English probably will not alter her speech or her thought, except in so far as a widened vocabulary makes every daughter or son of Adam a more efficient namer.

On the other hand, calling Standard English the white ruling class dialect deprives the concept of much of its factitious glamor. This synonym reveals both

the power base that lends the dialect its prestige and the politics inherent in teaching it. The most common defense of teaching white ruling class dialect is that command of that dialect will lull to sleep the watch dogs guarding the portals to comfortable consumerism and privileged power. These Cerberi (now you know my evaluation of the reality behind the portal) are finely attentive to subtleties of language use, but deaf to the appeals of merit, and, so the legend runs, blind to liabilities of race and status (as these are negatively evaluated by the ruling class).

This modicum of clarity proceeds from the salutary exercise of calling phenomena by frankly judgmental names rather than masking facts behind polite fictions. "Standard" English sounds neutral, but must ultimately be judged good or bad, especially by those who must decide whether to teach it, or, if not, what else to teach.

Just as I would not wish for my use of the term edited written English to obscure the fact that the term still refers to a form of Standard English, or white ruling class dialect, so I would not wish my use of the image of the Cerberi—those yapping watchdogs charmed by standard past participles—to obscure a serious claim put forward by defenders of Standard English. That claim is that employment and advancement in the professions, in business, and in many technical jobs require that employees command the idiom of their employers. This premise, which defines command as skill in understanding and producing the dialect, is both serious and questionable. First the moral question: Ought employers to demand allegiance to their own dialect? Or, the same issue in another guise, Do employers really reject applicants on linguistic grounds, or are those merely the surface excuse sanctioned by prejudice widespread throughout the society? That moral question has its practical side, of course, especially for those whose job applications are turned down; but next appears a purely utilitarian challenge to the claim that Standard English is useful in finding and keeping a job. On the job, how much do

employees actually use the Standard English we're talking about (edited written English, the standard register used in formal writing)? To answer that question, we must first disregard the asseverations of employers who might be seeking a rationale for discriminatory hiring. Instead we must look to the statements of employees themselves. One person who did that is John Harwood, an alumnus of The Sledd Experience. He found that the graduates of the school where he teaches write little and that "English teachers perpetuate a self-serving myth about writing in the real world."[2]

If we grant Harwood's thesis, and there is scantier reliable proof of its opposite, we may be unwilling to decide what to teach on purely utilitarian grounds. We may believe with Newman (the Cardinal, not the commentator) that a university education should be more than job training. He wrote: "When the intellect has once been properly trained and formed to have a connected view or grasp of things, it will be a faculty of entering with comparative ease into any subject of thought, and of taking up with aptitude any science or profession."[3]

That ideal stated in 1852 remains appealing today. Chomsky, writing in 1969, saw disturbing results of pragmatic education: "In an advanced industrial society, the link between the university and external social institutions tends to become more tight and intricate, because of the utility of the 'knowledge that is produced' . . . and the training that is provided."[4] The antidote Chomsky proposes could have been advanced by Newman or his early contemporary, John Stuart Mill: "One legacy of classical liberalism that we must fight to uphold with unending vigilance, in the universities and without, is the commitment to a 'free marketplace of ideas.'"[5]

This support, both ancient and modern, for education that is not trapped within the confines of immediate utility has implications for the teaching of Standard English, believe it or not. The conception of the university as a trainer of workers implies that students will be fitted as efficiently as possible into a saleable mold. A more humane conception of a freer university suggests

that students grow into individuality rather than get extruded like so many anonymous sausage links. That growth into self-realization is sparked largely by reading, and many, if not most of the authors that college students read write in Standard English. Therefore, students seeking personal growth are going to need to understand Standard English when they hear or see it. Schooling evidently succeeds better with aural understanding than with visual reading. But in either case this receptive command is different from the productive command needed to write Standard English. For a student whose native dialect is not Standard English, the requirement that he produce either spoken or written Standard English can easily threaten his personhood by altering his language.

It is a truism that one of the primary ways an individual defines herself is through her use of language. Through language, she can show what she feels allegiance to and what she wishes to separate herself from. First loyalties to family transmute themselves to peer-group bonds and then widen to embrace a speech community (however that tricky term is defined), a dialect area, a profession, a social class, a nation, an ethnic group. Lack of motivation can arrest this process at any point along the way; but at whatever point the process ceases, a person must come to a further realization if she is to become an individual in the fullest sense of the term. She must go beyond the them/us distinction. She must be able to distinguish me from the rest of us. She must see herself differentiated against a backdrop of her native or adopted speech community. Clearly, command of multiple dialects and of multiple registers within those native and adopted dialects will aid her exploration of her potential self. A wide command of language is a means of growth—of discovering and expressing facets of the self.

What if the college-grown "individual" cannot fit into the corporate mold? "What bliss it would be in that dawn to be alive." My butchered paraphrase must not hide the serious issue of an education so ideal that it unfits students for action in the real world. Getting and keeping a job is a pervasive and not unworthy

motive for getting a college education (even though I think it should not be allowed to become the university's reason for being). Indeed, until we can change the world and make employers both tell the truth about hiring decisions and make those decisions validly, we must offer Standard English to all who wish to try what mastering it will do for them.

Assuming that students' desire for improved employment is one legitimate motivation for learning Standard English, is it a sufficient motivation? In other words, we have circumnavigated to our first prior question, Can adults learn a second dialect? The answer is nearly as circular as our route to the question: While puberty begins the ossification of the ability to learn a language or dialect as a native would produce it,[6] apparently adults <u>can</u> learn a second dialect, but the task is extremely difficult and the command of a native is rarely achieved.[7] Motivation appears to be the key factor in achieving productive command.[8] Like second-language learners, students of a second dialect perform best when they believe that their command of the dialect will be rewarded by opportunities and participation in the foreign culture. No honest teacher can pledge that what students learn about second dialects will help them get ahead in the dominant culture, but it is clear that what they don't know can be held against them.[9] In other words, a teacher can't decide for students. They must decide for themselves, on the basis of the fullest, most honest, most objective information teachers can provide. The specific information I propose to offer must wait until another circuit--a short one--has been completed.

If it is true that individuals define themselves largely through language, would it not follow that the more peculiar their language, the more individualistic they? Following logic as the day the night makes one trip over simple objections. A person with a unique language may be the consummate individual, but he must talk to himself alone. Individuation of language--carried to extremes--leads to unintelligibility. Yet it is obvious that the extreme of unintelligibility is

not the issue in most college composition classes. It takes two to misunderstand--a reader as well as a writer. Most of the linguistic features that teachers penalize do not impede communication.[10] But some do. Many of the examples of student writing provided by Mina Shaughnessy in her careful book approach unintelligibility; they certainly do not communicate any precise meaning. Frequently their failure to communicate can be laid to errors--not just discrepancies from Standard English, but divergence from any recognizable system.[11] Because such errors DO impede communication, students should learn to eliminate them from their writing. Not to eliminate them is to lose one's voice: a voice that cannot get through to a listener or reader is, in effect, no voice at all.

But the attempt to eliminate one voice--the voice of the native dialect--and to replace it with the ventriloquism of Standard English is not the solution.[12] The proper effort ought to be the cultivation of an enriched, personal, individual, genuine voice, and that cannot be accomplished by stifling the native voice. I cringe to report that I officiated over just such a cultural laryngectomy. A student--call her Elizabeth--came to me full of talk, ideas, ambition. "I'll learn that English yet," she said. She already knew an English, I should have told her; but her effort to learn <u>that</u> English--Standard English--almost deprived her of any power to communicate in writing at all. The last paper by her that I read showed such deep confusion about rival systems that it was literally gibberish. By presenting only one system (Standard English), I had not helped her to understand the interrelations of two confoundedly similar dialects. By insisting on Standard English, I had robbed her of the faculty for communicative written expression.

And all in the name of eliminating errors to produce correct Standard English. Defining what constitutes an error is a complex undertaking that can no longer be resolved (if it ever really could be) by consulting traditional handbooks or relying on traditional training, both of which assume the universal and unvarying rightness of Standard English. The educator needs to get educated so that he can avoid

the pitfall, pointed out by Robbins Burling, of mistaking a systematic difference for an error.[13] An error is what neither conforms to any system of any dialect nor has any stylistic justification.

Conforming to the systematic grammar of a dialect is a matter of following its rules, which are, as Labov's studies remind us, abstracted from communal usage and not the reverse (that is to say, use is not based on a priori rules). It seems to me that a student pursuing his burgeoning individuality needs to become familiar with the rules of as many different dialects and the restrictions of as many different registers as he can get interested in controlling. Until he has, how can he be sure that he is choosing the most fitting linguistic resource to express himself? For business reasons, for social reasons, for preaching, for lovemaking, for commendation or insult, on the playing field or in the Oval Office, he will need a wide variety of expressive tools. To show forth the full extent of his individuality he will need to know when to follow and when not to be led by the rules of the register or dialect appropriate to his situation.

This ideal brings me--at last, you will say--to my pedagogical proposal. Here I differ with Mina Shaughnessy, whose work I respect. I mention her because what separates us is a political difference, the recognition of which will bring me back to my beginning--cycle and epicycles--where I can stop. What I propose is simply to teach all students about the systematic nature of all pertinent dialects, along with the social and cultural advantages and limitations of major registers of each.[14] This tall order in an already crowded semester has the advantage of doing what Jim Sledd recommended at least as early as 1965--teaching students about liberating language rather than about entrapments of usage.[15] Moreover, it teaches students respect for their own dialect and those of others. No longer can a locution (and its utterer) be dismissed as "not following the rules of English" when all the critic means is "That locution doesn't follow the rules of my dialect." Giving everybody receptive command over a range of dialects renders less necessary productive command, and should reduce the clamor for it, and so

relieve the crisis in writing. As Labov says, "It is not entirely clear that all of the adjustment must be on the part of the non-standard language and the vernacular culture."[16] Helping all students increase their multidialectal receptivity breeds in them self-confidence in tandem with self-doubt, daring together with skepticism, and power with restraint. We've died and gone to Heaven.[17]

Stressing in class the systematic differences between Standard English and other pertinent dialects does more than foster respect for the dialects of others and for the others who use those dialects; along with that moral growth, such study fosters analytic intellectual growth. The dialect systems to be taught are chiefly grammatical,[18] and I submit that learning the grammar of his own and somebody else's dialect sharpens the student's analytical skills.[19] Discriminating the visual and auditory forms of words sharpens sensuous perceptions useful at the microscope or violin. Learning which word forms belong in which syntactic places requires the same mental discipline that learning mathematical operations demands. This mental discipline is transferrable to any form of academic or professional inquiry. And here is where composition courses are most likely to be useful in on-the-job-writing. The analytical habit of mind, which study of the grammatical and organizational aspects of writing encourages, will be personally stimulating and professionally useful.

In his critique of Shaughnessy's Errors and Expectations, John Rouse complains of her emphasis on rules and rationality. My emphasis on the systematic comparison of dialect grammars opens me to the same sort of charge. Rouse complains that instead of encouraging the emotional growth of her students, Shaughnessy promotes analytical skills. He charges that she overemphasizes analysis and grammar because she and the system she supports fear the explosive potential latent in students' inchoate emotions. I think Rouse is wrong about the undeveloped nature of students' emotions and wrong about Ms. Shaughnessy's denial of that facet of their personalities.[20] Clearly neither reason nor emotion should be encouraged to the exclusion of the other. A full discussion such as I have

suggested of the value of language in external dealings and internal identities tries to be fair to both thought and feeling. It is true that Shaughnessy does not go this far: she questions the pedagogical cost of teaching anything other than Standard English. Here her political bias becomes obvious. The efficient working of the system is to be valued over the development of the students it is supposed to serve.[22] This single fall from grace is understandable in terms of issues dear to the hearts of teachers of writing. The audience she wished to reach (academic supporters of the system) would simply dismiss any insights offered by a writer who ignored the political realities of purse control.

My circle is virtually complete. I should like, before I quit, to recall Cardinal Newman. "The philosophy of an imperial intellect," he said, "is based, not so much on simplification as on discrimination."[23] He means, I think, discrimination in its best sense of noticing genuine, legitimate differences. It is no doubt simple to insist that anything that doesn't measure up to handbook Standard English is not acceptable in college, but, though immeasurably more difficult, it is commensurately <u>better</u> to undertake the task of discriminating between effective and ineffective uses of language, based on the shifting criteria, not only of subject, audience, and purpose, but of dialect, register, and situation, as well.[24] We can all profit from discriminating between the different meanings of similar words (infer/imply, un- versus disinterested, sensuous/sensual), but we mustn't expect to have a very wide audience before which to show off our command of these distinctions. We can all profit just as much from learning the different meanings conveyed by <u>bad</u> and uninflected <u>be</u> and perfective <u>done</u>, although our appreciative audience will be far from universal here, too. We can all profit from developing an individual voice in our speaking and writing. With these goals of self-improvement as speakers and writers and teachers of English, we can keep busy. New dialects, new registers, new rules--some new things to learn, as Newman would have it, for their own sake, but also for the good they can do us and our students as individuals.[25]

NOTES

[1]"Any decision about language teaching is a moral and political decision." John Rouse, "The Politics of Composition," College English, 41 (1979), 12.

"For educational systems serve a quite clear and well-understood political-economic purpose [: to ensure] the status quo . . . [, to put] people in their place." Wayne O'Neil, "The Politics of Bidialectalism," in The Politics of Literature: Dissenting Essays on the Teaching of English, ed. Louis Kampf and Paul Lauter (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), pp. 252-253.

"What is the first priority of education--to serve the student or to serve the society?" Margaret Byrd Boegeman, "Lives and Literacy: Autobiography in Freshman Composition," College English, 41 (1980), 667.

" . . . what teachers do is in fact political whether we say so or not, and there is much to be gained by accepting this reality." Richard Ohmann, English in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 332.

[1a]The relation between Standard English and employability was questioned in 1971 by Orlando L. Taylor, in Sociolinguistics: A Cross-Disciplinary Perspective, ed. Roger Shuy (Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1971), p. 16.

[2] " . . . [illegible] wrote something on the average of once or twice a day." John T. Harwood, "Freshman English Ten Years After: Writing in the World," p. 3. He interprets this low frequency to mean that writing skills play a minor role in job performance. Moreover, Harwood's discovery that business majors wrote most on the job while humanities majors wrote least suggests that training in writing is a more remote career enhancer than is training in the substance of the business. Having reported Harwood's findings, I must add that he left holes in his study. The unwillingness of anonymous respondents to send writing samples gave him exactly no evidence of the degree to which anybody commanded Standard English. Moreover, there are internal inconsistencies in his report. Even though writing skills seem tangential to on-the-job success, Harwood found a significant correlation between salary and quanitity of writing. He said, "As income rose, so did the frequency of writing" (p. 7). That finding undercuts his thesis. In short, the whole issue of writing on the job requires thorough investigation; and a number of researchers, including me, are beginning to study the relation between command of Standard English and professional preferment.

[3]John Henry Newman, The Idea of a University, ed. I.T. Ker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 11.

[4]Noam Chomsky, "The Function of the University in a Time of Crisis," in Chomsky, For Reasons of State (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 303.

The parallel between the Churchman and the Grammarian should not be drawn too strongly. Newman downplayed university research; Chomsky believes that more varied research in universities is needed. Newman believed that

"Knowledge and Reason are . . . ministers to Faith" (Idea, p. 6); Chomsky calls for skepticism (Language and Responsibility: Based on Conversations with Mitsou Ronat (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979, p. 5). Newman: "A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are, freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom . . . ." (Idea, p. 96). Chomsky: "One element in the unending struggle to achieve a more just and humane social order will be the effort to remove the barriers--whether they be economic, ideological, or political--that stand in the way of particular forms of individual self-fulfillment and collective action that the university should make possible." (For Reasons of State, pp. 298-299).

[5]Chomsky, For Reasons of State, p. 311.

[5a]"In casual discourse, intelligibility of standard English to a non-standard speaker is not likely to be the major problem, as it can be for a speaker of another language. Since gross unintelligibility is not present, motives for learning may be different." Susan M. Irvin-Tripp, "Social Dialects in Developmental Sociolinguistics," in Sociolinguistics: A Cross-Cultural Perspective, p. 40.

[6]Chomsky, Language and Responsibility, p. 98. " . . . the regular rules of the vernacular must be formed in the preadolescent years." William Labov, Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), p. 290, note 24. In an earlier study (1964), Labov set a higher age limit on the possibility of achieving productive (though not necessarily native) command of a dialect: " . . . those youngsters who are below 50 percent at eighteen or nineteen years old will probably not reach any significant degree of conformity while they still have the learning ability to match performance to evaluation. At the ages of thirty-five or forty, these individuals may be able to evaluate the social significance of their own and other speech forms, without being able to shift their own performance." William Labov, "Stages in the Acquisition of Standard English," in Readings in American Dialectology, ed. Harold B. Allen and Gary N. Underwood (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971), p. 485.

[7]"Learning a foreign language is not the same as learning a second dialect. The literature in verbal learning has indicated again and again that it is harder to learn material that is quite familiar than it is to learn two sets of distinct material." Joan C. Baratz, "Educational Considerations for Teaching Standard English to Negro Children," in Teaching Standard English in the Inner City (Washington, D. C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1970), p. 38, note 10.

"Stylistic variation. In the next stage the child begins to learn how to modify his speech in the direction of the prestige standard, in formal situations, or even to some extent in casual speech. The great turning point seems to be exposure to a group larger than the neighborhood [vernacular] group in the first year of high school." Labov, "Stages in the Acquisition of Standard English," p. 486.

[8]Robbins Burling, English in Black and White (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1973), p. 140.

"Social and affective factors, including motivation and attitudes, have been found to cluster into a single variable [in second language learning]. This variable appears to determine the degree of language acquisition more directly than does aptitude." Helmut Esau and Michael Keene, "In Search of a Model for the Teaching of Writing," Paper delivered to Texas CCTE, March 7, 1980.

W. E. Lambert, et al., "A Study of the Roles of Attitudes and Motivation in Second-Language Learning," in Readings in the Sociology of Language, ed. Joshua Fishman (The Hague: Mouton, 1972), pp. 473-491.

[9]"I do not wish to suggest that the use of standard English by black children will insure their success in middle class white America or that it will erase prejudice against Negroes[;] nevertheless, since standard English is the language of the mainstream it seems clear that knowledge of the mainstream system increases the likelihood of success in the mainstream culture." Baratz, p. 38, note 6.

[10]An informal (and inconclusive) experiment carried out in a class on experimental design taught by Steve Witte and Lester Feagley at University of Texas at Austin in the Spring semester 1980 revealed that a small sample of high- and low-scored essays (as determined by holistic grading) diverged widely in ratio of trivial errors to total number of words (difference [Δ] between low and high means of .047) but less widely for serious errors (Δ .015) and less widely still for errors that actually muddled the students' message, or impeded communication (Δ .009).

[11]Anyone who doubts the seriousness and reality--the depth and spread of the errors documented in Mina Shaughnessy, Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), need only examine a set of the papers my colleagues and I receive to assure himself that her representation is accurate.

[12]"To succeed in eradicating the means of speech that children bring to schools might be to succeed in denying them access to sources of their own identity and feeling." Dell Hymes, "Introduction," Functions of Language in the Classroom, ed. Courtney B. Cazden, Vera P. John, and Dell Hymes (New York: Teacher's College Press, 1972), p. xlii.

[12a]"Students have no stable notions of what the standard alternative is among the alternatives in their repertoire." Ervin-Tripp, p. 45.

[13]"It is even difficult for the standard-speaking teacher to know when a child has simply translated into his own dialect and when he has made a more serious mistake, unless she has a secure knowledge of the nonstandard English of the child." Burling, p. 159. "Otherwise she may not only 'correct' pronunciations that are a normal part of their dialect, but she may also mistakenly accept genuine errors, supposing them to be a conventional way of talking." Burling, p. 148.

Labov points out another problem with defining error: how to separate mistakes from "deviations which are not considered errors but are tolerated as acceptable variation" (Stages, p. 494). The cultivation of tolerance needs to become a primary goal of education.

"The chief difficulty which we can now identify, therefore, is not so much in the dialect differences themselves as in the ignorance of those differences." Labov, The Study of Nonstandard English (Urbanna, Illinois: NCTE, 1969), p. 43.

The Black Caucus of the NCTE agrees: "The Black English language system of itself is not a barrier to learning. The barrier is negative attitudes toward the language system, lack of information about the system, inefficient techniques for teaching language skills, and an unwillingness to adapt teaching styles to student learning needs." "A Statement from Members of the Black Caucus/NCTE," November 1979.

[14]"The way we learn about appropriate and effective language use may be quite different from the way we learn language structure. Perhaps here an explicit sociolinguistic curriculum could be valuable."Courtney Cazden, "Language as Means of Instruction and Classroom Environment," in Language as a Human Problem, ed. Einar Haugen and Morton Bloomfield (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1974), p. 145. "Pertinent" in the text means "native to the population of any specific classroom" and is predicated upon the teacher's knowledge of those dialect systems.

Wayne O'Neil apparently suggested much the same thing more than a decade ago in a review I have not been able to examine ("Paul Roberts' Rules of Order: The Misuse of Linguistics in the Classroom," The Urban Review, II, 7 (1968), 12, 17).

[15]"Freedom and responsibility, to be highflown about it, are the two best lessons we can teach as we help our students to choose their language well, and we ought not to waste the time we have for those lessons by talking much about usage . . . . Our first step in teaching the use of English is to persuade our students that writing and speaking should be purposeful, that their language must be judged by its effectiveness for their purposes, and that their purposes must be judged appropriately too. More bluntly, they must decide what is right and choose the language that will get it done." James Sledd, "On NOT Teaching English Usage," English Journal, 54 (1965), 702.

" . . . real people in the real world . . . know that they can't accomplish the same purposes with all the languages or dialects that they command." James Sledd, "Linguistic Relativism: The Divorce of Word from Work," paper delivered in 1980, p. 38.

[16]Labov, The Study of Nonstandard English, p. 56. Dell Hymes says that since the effort to make the stigmatized individual adapt has failed, it is "reasonable to insist on adaptation as well on the part of those who stigmatize." Functions of Language in the Classroom, p. xxxiv.

[17]"Certainly the black ghetto child should not have to forego his verbal links to spontaneity and familiarity. If other Americans can learn to accept him as he is linguistically and socioculturally, there is no reason why he should not be able to learn other varieties of English as well for particular functions and relationships. The learning gap is on both sides of the ghetto wall . . . ." Joshua A. Fishman and Erika Lueders-Salmon, "What Has the Sociology of Language to Say to the Teacher: On Teaching the Standard Variety to Speakers of Dialectal or Sociolectal Varieties," in Functions of Language in the Classroom, p. 77.

[18]Even though he recommends a different aim and emphasis from mine, Walt Wolfram agrees that grammar instruction is primary: "There is good reason to suggest that the teaching of Standard English to Black English speakers should focus on grammatical features before phonological features." Walt Wolfram, "Sociolinguistic Implications for Educational Sequencing," in Teaching Standard English in the Inner City, p. 111. I would let phonology take a remote back seat, since "losing the accent" is the last stage in mastering a second dialect or language. I am indebted to Joe Barwick for the words in quotation marks.

" . . . dialects differ primarily in the way in which they use these variables--that is, in the distribution of frequencies along the stylistic range. It would follow that writing a different grammar for each dialect is a wateful and unnatural procedure; rather, it seems likely that the various dialects of English can be organized within a single pan-dialectal grammar." Labov, The Study of Nonstandard English, p. 21.

[19]The informal study referred to in Note 10 also showed that of the errors impeding communication only 11 percent were grammatical, while of the serious errors and trivial errors combined, 40 percent were grammatical. If error elimination were the single goal of grammar instruction, such data as these would minimize the importance of teaching it. I believe, however, that grammar instruction that aims to increase analytic ability may also reduce errors as a welcome side effect. If it does nothing else, grammar instruction should give the student the argumentative terminology to defend his own linguistic and stylistic choices.

[20]"Being able to re-scan and re-work sentences also assumes that the writer is conscious of what he wants to say; otherwise he cannot judge how close he has come to saying it . . . . But inexperienced writers also have trouble locating their purposes. Often in fact they think of purpose as what someone else wants of them. Usually they have not been taught to notice their responses to things nor to value these responses as possible content for academic statements. As a result, they are in the habit of discarding what they need most to be able to write--their felt thoughts--and trying instead to approximate the meaning they think is expected of them." Shaughnessy, p. 80.

Rouse also errs in implying that Shaughnessy views grammar as the sole content of composition instruction. As she points out on p. 73, the grammatical approach is one of three that should be tried, and the third is methods of improving students' self-concepts, of building self-confidence through affective responses.

Rouse, finally, seems deliberately to misread Shaughnessy's title: " . . . other teachers, other authorities, expect [students] to get right-- [things] that, it seems, is the principal reference of the word expectations in her title (p. 240)" (Rouse, p. 7). Actually, Shaughnessy explains her title on p. 294 and earlier: " . . . the prospects for improvement are better than most teachers expect" (p. 276).

[21]Shaughnessy, p. 156 .

[22]"I believe that neither schools nor societies are served by mass-produced people, who automatically obey whoever is in authority, but they are served by individuals who question, who probe, who find a better way to do whatever needs doing . . . . I reject . . . as a goal of education ["a standardization rather than a development of student minds and characters"] Boegeman, p. 667.

In fairness to Shaughnessy, it must be said that she consistently looks beyond errors to the students who make them. By insisting that errors are the result of discriminatory and ineffectual education, her book represents a step toward alleviating that injustice, notwithstanding the fact that not everything that she counts as an error is justifiable.

[23]Newman, p.371 . Cf. Irwin Feigenbaum: " . . . production is easier for the students after they have learned to discriminate and identify what they will be called on to produce." In Teaching Standard English in the Inner City, p. 93.

[24]" . . . the teacher has no more tolerance for style shift than the adolescent groups [do]. Neither teacher nor student is aware of the fact that they both follow the same pattern of style shifting in their language, though at different levels. The teacher struggles to impose a fixed standard, which she mistakenly believes she follows herself, upon youngsters who mistakenly believe that they also make no concession to the other side in daily life." Labov, "Stages in the Acquisition of Standard English," p. 490.

[25]" . . . if the child is to participate in the community of the teacher, then the teacher must be able to participate in the community of the child." Dell Hymes, Functions of Language in the Classroom, p. xxxix. If we can't change the requirement that all students pass freshman composition, at least we can strive to make the course put equal demands on all students.